

ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS MEETING – 21 October 2022

Agreed Communiqué

Australia's environment ministers met today in Brisbane and made three landmark commitments to halt and reverse biodiversity loss across our nation and put Australia's environment back on a path of recovery.

The 2021 State of the Environment Report found that Australia's unique animals and plants are under significant pressure. **Action is needed quickly to arrest environmental decline and prevent new extinctions of plants and animals.**

In recognition of the scale and urgency of environmental challenges, ministers agreed:

1. To work collectively to achieve a national target to protect and conserve **30% of Australia's landmass and 30% of Australia's marine areas by 2030.**
2. To note the Commonwealths' intention to establish a **national nature repair market** and agreed to work together to make nature positive investments easier, focusing on a consistent way to measure and track biodiversity.
3. To work with the private sector to **design out waste and pollution, keep materials in use** and foster markets to achieve a **circular economy by 2030.**

Increased protection for threatened species – working towards zero new extinctions

The recently released **Threatened Species Action Plan** sets out a pathway for threatened species conservation and recovery over the next 10 years. Ministers agreed to accelerate work towards **zero new extinctions** and to work together to protect and conserve **30% of Australia's land and 30% of Australia's marine areas by 2030.**

Achieving the target will be difficult, but the science is clear. We need to protect and conserve 30% of the planet to reduce the rate and risk of extinctions and safeguard the world's biodiversity. As a megadiverse country, Australia needs to play its part. New Indigenous Protected Areas will make a large contribution to the target, and doubling the number of Indigenous Rangers will ensure our First Nations peoples are at the forefront of conservation efforts.

Ministers also agreed to:

- Accelerate national efforts to prevent new extinctions of native plants and animals, including working towards full implementation of the Common Assessment Method to enable **consistent national listing decisions.**
- Develop a new national framework to recognise **Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures** (OECMs) to complement growth in protected areas and to identify incentives to **increase private land conservation.**
- Better **manage invasive species** that are threatening protected biodiversity, including to advance the uptake of technologies for the control of feral cats.
- Explore opportunities for **strengthening marine protection** to secure health of our ocean in the face of climate-related changes and other emerging pressures.

A national market for biodiversity

The scale of Australia's biodiversity challenge means that governments can't foot the bill alone. The Australian Government announced on 26 August 2022 that it will establish a nature repair market to make it easier for businesses, organisations and individuals to invest in landscape restoration and management. The scheme will recognise landholders who restore and manage local habitat and grant them biodiversity certificates that can be sold to other parties.

- Ministers discussed different approaches to driving private sector investment including the importance of valuing nature and the need for a consistent way of **measuring, verifying and tracking biodiversity** to make it easier to invest in nature.
- Ministers agreed on the need to take account of lessons learned from existing market-based approaches.

Stronger environmental laws to better protect nationally significant animals, plants, habitats and places

Australia needs stronger and **more effective environmental regulation** to better protect nationally significant animals, plants, habitats and places including waterways and marine environments.

The **Australian Government response to the Samuel Review** will provide a clear statement of the Australian Government's reforms to environmental protection at the national level including through establishment of a national Environment Protection Agency.

Ministers agreed:

- To engage on the development of strong **new national environmental standards**, led by the Australian Government, as a key early action to underpin environment law reforms.
- That **regional planning** is an important tool to achieve biodiversity outcomes and improve certainty for proponents seeking environmental approvals, and to work together and with local governments on regional planning including identifying potential locations by the end of 2022.
- To work together to improve the quality, accessibility and interoperability of **environmental data** to aid decision-making.

Waste, recycling and the circular economy

Australia has made progress to improve our waste management and recycling activities under the **National Waste Policy Action Plan** but we must do more to prevent waste, including better product design and more efficient production processes. The National Waste Policy Action Plan will be expanded over the coming year to strengthen Australia's efforts towards our 2030 targets.

There are growing concerns about environmental impacts of problematic waste streams, including single use plastics, end of life tyres, and electronic goods.

Ministers noted the Australian Government's intention to develop a regulatory product stewardship scheme for solar panels and household electronics, and also agreed:

- To develop nationally harmonised definitions to support the phase out of **problematic single use plastic**.
- To reform the regulation of packaging by 2025, to ensure that all packaging available in Australia is designed to be recovered, reused, recycled and reprocessed safely in line with circular economy principles.
- That the Australian Government add end of life tyres to the Minister's Product Stewardship Priority List, signalling the intention to regulate should industry not lift its game.
- The Commonwealth will work with jurisdictions to phase out the use of **harmful chemicals** in food packaging.

ENDS